

Abstract

In both Buddhist and psychotherapeutic praxes, depictions of intimate human interactions often form key moments of transformation. These interactions can be better understood when such key moments are placed within a narrative trajectory. Whether taken alone or in some Buddhist-psychotherapy hybrid combination, the narrative examination of their trajectories allows for a consideration of the interface of Buddhism and psychotherapy as well as their examination within the context of globalization.

Introduction

According to Jeremy Safran and J. Christopher Muran, “After approximately a half century of psychotherapy research, one of the most consistent findings is that the quality of the therapeutic alliance is the most robust predictor of treatment success,” and “This finding has been evident across a wide range of treatment modalities” (2000: 1). While the concept of “therapeutic alliance” has had a long and varied history, at its core it involves the therapist’s attention to, and engagement in, the client-therapist relationship. Moreover, in this relationality with the client, there is often an emphasis on the therapist’s affective engagement with the client, whether this is regarded in terms of types of affect such as sympathy or empathy, or in its modality such as collaboration and countertransference. Regardless, the concept of “therapeutic alliance” denotes the idea that therapist and client are in some way working together towards a successful outcome, however that might be defined. “Resistance” to and “ruptures” in the client-therapist relationship are a regular occurrence in the context of psychotherapy; however, for a course of therapy to be successful, such moments of resistance and rupture must be overcome and healed.

In the context of Buddhist practice, the master-disciple or teacher-student relationship is similarly significant. In many schools and sects of Buddhism, the success of this relationship is considered to be key to the very vitality of tradition. In Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions in particular, the master-disciple lineage is often considered the lifeblood of the tradition; even in Theravāda traditions, where lineage may not be as formally codified, tutelage under a recognized teacher is often regarded highly. There are major differences between Buddhist views of the master-disciple/teacher-student relationship, on the one hand, and “therapeutic alliance” as defined in psychotherapy, on the other. Nevertheless, one can consider that therapist and client, master and disciple, must work together to achieve a successful course of therapy or Buddhist practice.

Most often, these relationships are considered in pairs, that is, as one therapist and one client, or as one master and one disciple. There are many other praxis configurations, identifiable from the earliest Buddhist Nikaya discussions of solitary *pratyekabuddha* to contemporary discourse on marriage and family therapy as well as group therapy. Some consideration will be given to other praxis configurations, but the dyadic configuration is the main one under consideration here.

Focus on this relationship in both the cases of psychotherapy and Buddhist praxis enables us to consider two complex, interrelated themes: the subtle, often spontaneous, and idiosyncratic character of the human relationships at the core of Buddhism and of psychotherapy; and trends within globalization that influence and help to shape them. On the one hand, case histories, journals, and first-hand accounts contain endless examples of the highly particular, unexpected turns that occur within praxis relationships. On the other, they often reflect, implicitly and explicitly, the pressures of globalization that insinuate themselves into these relationships.

Narrative analysis can provide a larger framework for examining therapeutic and praxis relationships and globalization’s influences upon them. As Richard Payne suggests, the marriage of Buddhism and psychotherapy can be seen as problematic when one considers the narrative framework of

a ritually defined progression of classical Buddhist examples of religious praxis over against contemporary narratives of psychotherapy that are inscribed within commodified, consumer-based cultures (2008). However, it is not as if contemporary Buddhist praxis does not also occur under similar constraints of the global economy. Furthermore, although consumer commodification may be more pronounced and widespread today than in previous centuries, it is not as if globalization began with the invention of the concept as it is used today.

To remain ensconced within the phenomenological level of the self-defined narratives of any particular praxis - psychotherapy, Buddhism, or any combination thereof – presents the problem of the failure to locate these praxes within the influences of globalization. As Russell McCutcheon suggests, the lack of critical reflection on the role of globalization in enabling religious discourse too easily results in naïve or even self-deceived theological affirmations (1997). The same could be said for psychotherapy, and thus, for any synthesis of Buddhism and psychotherapy as well. At the same time, to simply reduce the subtle and complex human interactions of Buddhist and psychotherapeutic praxes to the ideological terms of globalization seems also somehow one-sided and imbalanced.

There are many other discourses to be considered beyond what is outline here. Nevertheless, to locate key human relationships in Buddhism and psychotherapy, in the master-disciple/teacher-student relationship and in the therapeutic alliance, within their native normative narratives as well as within the context of globalization, offers a telling glimpse into the practice of Buddhism and of psychotherapy as they stand on their own, as well as possible combinations thereof.

The Case of Maura “Soshin” O’Halloran

The story of Maura O’Halloran (1955-1982) is presented through the published record of journals and letters, *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind* (1994). She was born in Boston, Massachusetts to an Irish father and American mother. After her father’s untimely death in an auto accident in 1969, her mother moved her and her siblings to Ireland where she eventually graduated with honors from Trinity College in Dublin double-majoring in economics and sociology. With a background of personal interest in spirituality and social activism, she eventually made her way to Japan, where she sought out Zen masters, leading to a three-year period of intensive Zen practice at Kannonji in rural Iwate Prefecture. Kannonji, a Sōtō Zen monastery, was unusual in that it followed the Rinzai practice of assigning Zen problems or *kōan* to be tested in private interviews, *dokusan*, with the master, Ban Tetsugyū, also known as Go Rōshi. O’Halloran successfully passed a course of three thousand *kōan*, and her master gave her recognition as an awakened teacher at her completion ceremony, or Hishinsai. She soon planned to return to Ireland to found her own Zen center. Tragically, during a trip through Asia, a tour bus she rode had an accident, and she died along with two others at the age of twenty-seven. In a eulogy to O’Halloran, her teacher wrote (1994: 298-9):

Our grand master Dogen went to China and to the Tendo mountain for one thousand days, working hard all day, he sat for meditation at night. He slept two or three hours in the sitting position. Maura did the same. She was the modern Dogen....

There was a spring training at Kannonji from May 2nd for five days. Maura reached her enlightenment on the first day. She went in for meditations twice, three times a day, and solved all three thousand koans. We had her Hishinsai ... on August 7th, 1982....

She had achieved what took Shakuson [Shakyamuni Buddha] 80 years in twenty-seven years. She was able to graduate Dogen’s thousand-day training. Then she left this life immediately to start the salvation of the masses in the next life! Has anyone known such a courageously hard working Buddha as Maura? I cannot possibly express my astonishment.

-Ban Tetsugyu

Such was the remarkable, brief career of O'Halloran, that a memorial statue of her has been erected on the grounds of Kannonji.

Traditional Zen Buddhist Narrative. On the face of it, this eulogy and many of the journal entries and letters by O'Halloran herself convey the sense of a traditional Zen narrative in an "authentic" training monastery. There is a kind of "living museum" quality to the story as it unfolds. It is as if the reader is given a rare glimpse into a long-forgotten world, a gem of a traditional spiritual practice into which one is given an intimate, inside account. It has the flavor of a salvage ethnography, made all the more compelling by the fact that the observer, O'Halloran, is fully a participant. She shaves her head, wears traditional robes, cleans, cooks, chants, and meditates. So thoroughly does she become immersed in the environment of this rural Zen monastery that her fellow practitioners begin to remark how "Japanese" she has started to appear. She is not only a full participant, but she is held up as a paradigmatic participant, an upholder of the very tradition of the historical Buddha himself. This is one narrative.

Contemporary Feminist Narrative with Therapeutic Undertones. At the same time that O'Halloran's story seems to achieve a remarkably emic perspective, she never abandons her etic identity as a contemporary Western woman, highly educated, socially conscious, and feminist in her orientation. She remains eminently relatable to much of her likely readership in maintaining her Western identity. She is duly incensed when she is made to do the "women's work" of cleaning and cooking while her male counterparts avoid such duties and dump them on her, and she is appalled at the patriarchal manner in which Japanese men can treat Japanese women. Even after immersing herself in her practice and gaining recognition by her teacher for breaking through the initial *kōan, mu*, she wonders whether she might someday go back to graduate school to do research on French poststructuralism and psychoanalysis. At one point, she makes it sound as if her Zen practice is a kind of modern therapy for ego narcissism:

Tachibani Sensei got really angry with Tetsugen-san. Says he treats me like a thing: a temple attachment, and shows no gratitude. That's an exaggeration, though he treats me often like a maid.... Now, pretty much I just say "Hai" and do as I'm told. I reckon in the long run it's I who gains he who loses, I who'll get my ego battered and his that will grow more entrenched" (196-7).

While on the surface there is a distinctly Western, therapeutic coloring to her words, the actual valence of her statement is quite the opposite, reinforcing traditional Zen Buddhist emphasis on internalizing all external conflicts and accepting the constraints of the dominant institutional and social order as providing opportunities for self-effacement and the practice of non-ego. This Western-Zen inversion that favors the latter occurs continuously throughout the work; these patterns of inversion, effected as an interweaving of traditional Zen and modern Western narrative threads, leads to the creation of a hybrid narrative.

Hybrid Narrative and Soteriological Alliance. If the therapeutic alliance can be considered a key to successful psychotherapy, then in the context of traditional Buddhist practice, the soteriological alliance between master and disciple, teacher and student, might be regarded as a sort of religious counterpart.

Initially, O'Halloran wants to believe that her romanticized image of Zen Buddhism in Japan, populated by cheerful, free-spirited, egalitarian, enlightened monks, is confirmed by her participation in their world: "The place is totally non-sexist. I half expected to be pointed towards the kitchen, but I saw wood and move furniture with the best of them. And no condescending 'Didn't she do well?' It's just taken for granted. I'm totally one of the lads" (24-25).

Eventually, however, the scales fall from her eyes, and she realizes that she has been socialized into the patriarchal culture of the Zen temple and surrounding community: “I’ve been socialized. I don’t know how or who did it, ... but now I jump up, get the tea, fetch like a servant or dog or Japanese wife. It is a real socialization because I wasn’t even aware of it” (178). Cooking, washing dishes, begging in bare feet and straw sandals, meditating exposed to freezing cold temperatures, being deprived of sleep, she is able to endure it all because of one reason: her love of her Zen master, Go Rōshi, and their shared commitment to the completion of her Zen practice. O’Halloran is able to subsume her Western feminist identity to the patriarchal terms of Zen practice because for her the light of enlightenment, embodied in the person of her teacher, outshines her desire to affirm her sense of Western autonomy.

Yet, this is not quite true. There is one sticking point on which she simply cannot come to an agreement with Go Rōshi: marriage. As her practice develops, he exerts increasing pressure on her to marry a Japanese monk named Tetsugen, whom she finds particularly repulsive as he is too old, lazy, and domineering. She continues to push herself in her Zen practice, but finally, matters come to a head. She can no longer bear the thought of marrying him, and she confronts her master to tell him that she refuses (227-229):

In this overly sensitized state, I went to dokusan. Go Rōshi told me I was to marry Tetsugen-san on September 18th and stay in this temple. I said I didn’t want to. He was pushing me, pushing me hard. It was killing me to refuse him. I love him so very, very much, and he was being so insistent, thinking of everything to induce me. I begged him not to ask, no not that. Finally, I broke down and told him something of ... my dreams for Ireland [and of founding a Zen center there]. He said he’d think it over. I went out in tears, became quite hysterical.... I knew I was being ridiculous.

All along I realized my reaction was out of proportion to the situation. We were walking back towards the zendo when my legs gave way. I fainted.... Something left me, some huge oppressive weight that I’d never known was there and only recognized in its lifting.... My mind never felt so clear or lucid....

Next day, Go Rōshi said, “Until last night you were human trying to become God; now you’re God. I’m Buddha.” He shook my hand. “We must help others.” He said it would be all right for me to go back to Ireland after three years.

In this one moment, her Western sensibilities are thoroughly hybridized with her master’s Zen teachings, and their soteriological alliance is crystallized: “We must help others.” It is not clear whether he had been aware that she was adamantly against the Zen marriage that he had been arranging or whether he gradually came to recognize this sticking point as an effective moment for exercising his skillful means. She knew that her commitment to him and his practice could not be conditional upon her own Western sense of autonomy and that she would have to be willing to give up everything to achieve thoroughgoing awakening. Yet, no matter how hard she tried to do so, she simply could not relinquish her dreams of returning to Ireland and of not marrying the old monk Tetsugen.

Paradoxically, now that she honestly expresses and owns her own emotions of dislike and aspiration, she is able to let go of her obsession with them: “I knew I was being ridiculous. All along I realized my reaction was out of proportion to the situation.” Later on, she confirms this as she expresses the sense of freedom she feels: “Whether I’m here or in Ireland, married or not, none of it seems a big deal. It seems I should assent and truly throw my life away for training. . . In the real world, Rōshi’s and my ideas are so different. But it seems I have no criteria left by which to make a decision. Anything is okay” (276).

The sense of spiritual fulfillment and freedom she conveys is eerily prescient, as she describes a completeness beyond human constructs of life and death, less than a year before her fatal bus accident:

Now I'm 26, and I feel as if I've lived my life. Strange sensation. Almost as if I'm close to death. Any desires, ambitions, hopes I may have had have either been fulfilled or spontaneously dissipated. I'm totally content. Of course, I want to get deeper, see clearer, but even if I could only have this paltry, shallow awakening, I'd be quite satisfied. . . So in a sense I feel I have died; for myself there is nothing to strive after, nothing to make my life worthwhile or justify it. At 26, a living corpse and such a life!... To give myself is all I can do, as the flowers have no choice but to blossom. At the moment the best I can see to do is to give to people this freedom, this bliss, and how better than through zazen?" (232-233)

Subtext of Globalization. The factors comprising the publication of *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind* constellate an almost ideal narrative. Drawn from her journal entries and letters that were never meant to be published, the result is a work of intense, palpable sincerity, honesty, vulnerability, love, and dedication. As a book, the fact of her untimely death works to preserve and amplify the purity of her life in a manner that may not have been possible had she continued on, established her dream Zen center, and dealt with the complexities and ambiguities of institutions, society, and life itself. In fact, we would not have this book *without* her death, and she lives on through or even *as* her book.

At the same time, the entries in this work also contain the telltale traces of globalization. O'Halloran was a white Western woman, highly attractive by all counts, who was given special exception and privilege to join an otherwise all-male monastic community as an equal (some lay Japanese women were also allowed to practice, but they were not allowed to be ordained). As Anne Klein notes in recounting her own experience, Western women like herself have often been given exceptional, equal status as Asian men in the context of Buddhist practice in Asian cultures; this is due to their superior social and economic status (1995). In exchange for equal admission, these Western women provide access to powerful sources of Western capital: financial, institutional, social, and even affective capital in the form of gendered emotional validation.

Maura is at once uncomfortable with and appreciates the extra attention she receives. She wishes to be simply "one of the lads," but she also enjoys a kind of minor celebrity as a camera crew arrives to document her Zen exploits, and those around her are fascinated by her foreignness and physical beauty. She is also a product of globalization in the sense of her privilege to travel. The Japanese in the rural areas near Kannonji may be fascinated by stories of America or Europe or other distant lands they read about or see on television, but most of them will not have the opportunity to travel. O'Halloran, though coming from a difficult background raised by a single mother, eventually achieves sufficient status and means to make the trip to Japan, to tour Asia, as well as make trips back home. Although she comes from a background of cosmopolitan learning and social activism, some of her observations during her travels shows she can also be naïve. When she visits Korea, she cannot comprehend Koreans' criticism of Japan and of the wartime complicity of Buddhist monks. To her, Gō Roshi and his peers are enlightened masters, pure and untainted by the dust of the world.

Thus, the narrative effect of *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind* is to convey an idealized vision of Japanese Zen Buddhism that is almost seamlessly hybridized with O'Halloran's Western sensibilities, including its psychotherapeutic discourses. The precise point at which her Western narrative feminist autonomy most conflicts with her master's traditional Zen narrative, itself becomes the climax of this hybridity, and conflict is completely resolved. On the one hand, her narrative of psychological autonomy is inverted and subsumed to the Zen narrative of her master: "Whether I'm here or in Ireland, married or not, none of it seems a big deal. It seems I should assent and truly throw my life away for training." On the other, her teacher affirms her superior cosmopolitan status with its international social mobility: "He said it would be all right for me to go back to Ireland after three years."

Substantial critical examination is now taking place of the appropriation of Buddhist meditation methods abstracted from their historical roots and contexts of ritual practice. Nevertheless, one should not

underestimate the implicit draw of traditional Asian narratives as part and parcel of the attractiveness of such practices as mindfulness, insofar as one can obtain purchase in them without having to sacrifice access to privileged forms of social and cultural capital. Although O'Halloran's story is not explicitly that of the marriage of Buddhism and psychotherapy, examination of the narrative trajectory of *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind* can be illuminating precisely for the foregrounding of the "pure" Buddhist narrative that it weds to contemporary Western narrative themes.

Part of the fascination with religious practices foreign to one's own native religious narratives is that they can be construed and constructed free of the historical and cultural complications that are unavoidably in view locally. Western engagement with Buddhist practice often contains this element of salvage ethnography that holds out the highly attractive possibility of participation without a commitment to its full normative implications, a critical examination of its historical ambiguity, or a consideration of its ramifications in the context of globalization.

Lay Buddhist Narrative. There are many other Buddhist temples in the area around Morioka in Iwate Prefecture where Go Roshi's temple Kannonji is located. As in the rest of Japan, most of these temples are not intensive practice centers like Kannonji but rather congregational temples where most of the members are lay, often go to the temples for funerals and memorial services, but also may attend monthly dharma services or periodic study groups. In the immediate vicinity of Kannonji, in Yahabachō, most of the temples are either Sōtō-shū or Jōdo-Shinshū. The story of not only Maura O'Halloran but that of the monks of Kannonji are exceptional in the sense that they are not representative of Japanese Buddhism, or Asian Buddhism generally. The vast majority of Asian Buddhists have never sat on a meditation cushion, and their practices may be broadly characterized as devotional. That does not mean that lay Buddhists are necessarily any less devout or religiously accomplished, something that O'Halloran herself notes:

[Tetsugen] told me to plant *kiku* [*chrysanthemums*].... I quite firmly said I'd go to Sasaki-san's and get them, but I'm not planting them today. He looked shocked and giggled nervously, a bit embarrassed. "Why?" I said I had other work to do. I didn't feel or sound annoyed. Pushing the wheelbarrow down to Sasaki's for the *kiku*, I felt, "Hee, hee, I'm a bitch, I'm terrible, but chuckle, chuckle, I enjoyed that." Then, I saw her – skinny, 70, down on the floor vigorously scrubbing the already gleaming wood with such earnestness she didn't even hear my call I felt ashamed. She trundled into the garden and dug me up *kiku* from the ends of the rows she'd already neatly trimmed, thinned, and transplanted. She motioned me into the shed, all the time half running.... Ashamed, thoroughly ashamed, I ... pushed my barrow past the rice fields with the radios, the many bent bodies at their jobs. I wondered what they thought about, if they thought at all. Were they like so many Zen masters, living their koans – digging and digging and only digging? (197)

This narrative of the lay Buddhist ladies tirelessly working like so many Zen masters evokes the rich, lay-based Buddhist congregations found in Asia as well as in North America. Accounts of lay congregations and narratives of fellowship are just beginning to be made available, such as are found in Jeff Wilson's *Buddhism of the Heart: Reflections on Shin Buddhism and Inner Togetherness* (2009). In psychotherapy, there may be some resonances with group therapy but also considerable differences. Predominantly, the discourse of psychotherapy, including that of contemporary Buddhism and psychotherapy, tends to be dyadic, involving one therapist and one client.

O'Halloran's narrative of the laity working "like so many Zen masters ... digging and digging and only digging" raises another question beyond that of monastic versus lay, individual relation to the teacher versus congregational fellowship. She presents a scene of lay farmers; in the agriculturally-based

economies of traditional Asian societies, many lay Buddhists were indeed farmers. The practice of psychotherapy and of Buddhism and psychotherapy hybrids tend to be concentrated in intellectual urban centers and the surrounding suburbs, not in rural agricultural areas. Urban and suburban culture depends upon the produce of rural agricultural regions, yet the forces of globalization, driven by urban centers and suburbia, are exerting tremendous pressure on rural agricultural regions that are diminishing in terms of available arable land, subject to pollution, and facing water crises. How do the soteriological and therapeutic narratives of Buddhism and psychotherapy incorporate agricultural narratives of lay Buddhists in an age of globalization?

The story of Maura Soshin O'Halloran as found in *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind* presents a remarkable narrative of a contemporary Western woman who engages deeply with Zen Buddhist practice. It is compelling in its raw honesty, deep sincerity, vulnerability, and vivid spirituality. It also provides much food for reflection on Western appropriations of Buddhist practice, including that of Buddhism and psychotherapy hybrids, raising more questions than it answers.

The Case of the Gap-Toothed Woman

Milton Erickson (1901-1980) was an American psychotherapist, and although generally less well-known than many others including the other Erikson, "Erik," Milton Erickson has nonetheless been highly influential in the development of such modalities as family therapy, brief therapy, and hypnotherapy. His work, as found in the narrative case presented below, is instructive as an illustration of the therapeutic alliance.

This is the case of a young woman, severely depressed and with no social life, and dissatisfied with low-level office work in a construction firm. Her parents are dead, she is alone, and she feels completely isolated. She is at the end of her rope, and she threatens suicide unless Erickson is able to help her within three months. She is attracted to a young man at work, and he seems to show some interest in her, but she is unable to act on her impulses in any way. She tells Erickson that she would like to marry and have children but that she holds little hope for success:

The young woman was pretty, but she managed to make herself unattractive [with her unkempt hair and unflattering outfits]. . . . Her main physical defect, according to her, was a gap between her front teeth. [Yet] the gap was only about one-eighth of an inch. . . . Generally, this was a girl going downhill, heading for suicide, . . . and resisting any acts that would help her achieve her [stated] goal of getting married and having children.

Erickson approached this problem with two major interventions. He proposed to the girl that she have one last fling, [spending her savings on herself, at the clothing store and the hair salon]. . . . The woman was willing to accept the idea, since it was *not* a way of improving herself but part of going downhill and merely having a last fling.

Then Erickson gave her a [second] task. She was to go home and in the privacy of her bathroom practice squirting water through the gap between her front teeth until she could achieve a distance of six feet with accuracy. She thought this was silly, but it was partly the absurdity of it that made her go home and practice. . . .

When the girl was dressed properly, looking attractive, and skillful at squirting water through the gap in her teeth, Erickson made a suggestion to her . . . [to play] a practical joke. When that young man appeared at the water fountain at the same time she did, she was to take a mouthful of water and squirt it at him. Then she was to turn and run, but not merely run; she was to start to run toward the young man and then turn and "run like hell down the corridor."

The girl rejected this idea as impossible. Then she thought of it as a somewhat amusing but crude fantasy. . . . She was in a mood for a last fling anyhow.

On Monday, . . . [meeting the young man at the water fountain,] she filled her mouth with water and squirted it on him. The young man said something like “You damn bitch.” This made her laugh as she ran, and the young man took after her and caught her. To her consternation, he grabbed her and kissed her.

The next day the young lady approached the water fountain with some trepidation, and the young man sprang out from behind a telephone booth and sprayed her with a water pistol. The next day they went out to dinner together. . . . Within a few months she sent Erickson a newspaper clipping reporting her marriage to the young man, and a year later a picture of her new baby (Haley 1986: 71-72).

As Safran and Muran note, the client need not be fully conscious of the therapeutic alliance in order to participate in it. One could say that Erickson quickly and intuitively engages his client as an unwitting accomplice in her own therapy; the aspect of her unknowing participation actually becomes a key component to her successful outcome. The key lies in Erickson’s willingness to spontaneously adapt to her and her situation, to meet her emotionally where she is.

In recounting the history of the therapeutic alliance, Safran and Muran trace a trajectory from lesser personal, affective engagement by the therapist to greater involvement. In the early period, they identify the work of Sigmund Freud as someone who did recognize the positive role of a personable, warm therapeutic persona, but emphasized the necessity of the therapist’s willingness to serve as a relatively neutral canvas upon which the emotionally-charged transference projections of the client could be received. In Freud’s case, any countertransference from the side of the therapist was treated as largely negative and undesirable. His pupil C. G. Jung, who later parted ways with Freud, came to see countertransference as a necessary counterpoint to the client’s transference. In fact, properly effected, Jung considered countertransference as “the alpha and omega” of a successful course of psychotherapy.

According to Safran and Muran, this movement towards active engagement by the therapist has only grown over time: “As Wolfe and Goldfried (1998) maintain, the therapeutic alliance is the ‘quintessential integrative variable’” (11), wherein even the “distinction between transference and real aspects of the [therapeutic] relationship thus becomes meaningless” (10). Following Edward Bordin, Safran and Muran identify three key components of the therapeutic alliance: tasks, goals, and the bond: “The strength of the alliance is dependent on the degree of agreement between patient and therapist about the tasks and goals of the therapy, and on the quality of the relational bond between them” (11).

They emphasize the primacy of the therapist-client relationship over and above objective technique or method. While the technical aspects are still essential, the therapist must be flexible and adaptable enough so as to remain relationally, affectively connected with the client, responsive to negative reactions by the client as opportunities to deepen the therapeutic bond, and constantly willing to renegotiate the terms and course of therapy (12-13).

While these components can be broadly outlined, it can be difficult to describe their specific, practical implementation clearly. By its very nature, there is a spontaneous, uncontrived character to the therapeutic alliance; as Robert-Jay Green points out, “Telling therapists to ‘be warm’ or ‘be genuine’ simply puts them in a ‘be spontaneous’ paradox because true warmth and genuineness must, by definition, be guileless and uncontrived” (2012)

Whereas for Freud the technical aspects of psychoanalysis were predominant, and any “alliance” was limited primarily to encouraging the client to align with the analyst’s normative expectations, the working model for this more recent view of alliance has become increasingly flexible and fluid. However, it is also highly demanding insofar as it is incumbent upon the therapist to continually adjust and be present to the circumstances of the therapeutic relationship.

At first glance, Erickson’s treatment of the young woman described above may not seem to fit this definition of the therapeutic alliance. Rather than develop a clear goal in collaboration with her, identify the tasks to achieve her goals, and cultivate a strong, positive affective bond of encouragement,

he seems to dictate the terms of engagement in the face of her objections, and to lead her on a wild course of seemingly absurd adventures in anticipation of her demise. Of course, this is not the case at all, and in fact, if we recall that Safran and Muran indicate that the collaboration or alliance may not be a fully conscious one, then everything begins to make much more sense.

It is actually Erickson who makes the adjustment, not her, by recognizing and affirming her dire state. Yet, he can see immediately that she does not want to die at all, that she really wants to live. She even has a specific goal: to attract the attentions of her colleague at work, to get married, and have a family. Erickson lays out the tasks that will get her there. Consciously, she initially rejects the tasks that he lays out for her; Erickson not only expects this, he intends to create the negative reaction.

Yet, in their mischievous intent, he is her collaborator, her ally, rather than someone who dispenses therapeutic wisdom from a superior, distanced perspective. Thus, he creates mini-ruptures that become the opportunities for healing their relationship and consequently self-healing for her. In the process, he helps her to find her own way to turn what she had seen as her greatest negatives, her lack of financial resources, her unlovability, her unattractive appearance including her gapped teeth, and turns them all into her greatest assets. She spends everything she has on clothes and the hair salon, which allows her to show off her attractiveness, and the gap in her teeth becomes her primary weapon of seduction. The entire episode is so creative and spontaneous that one can hardly believe it actually occurred.

In fact, the numerous published case histories of Erickson's therapy often read as one unbelievable episode after another. They are sufficiently idiosyncratic and outlandish that digesting them has a kind of Ericksonian effect: It seems impossible to concoct so many strange stories that one might be led to conclude, life must be stranger than art. An entire literature has cropped up around the attempt to extract the systematic logic behind Erickson's approach, resulting in what has come to be known as NLP, or Neuro-Linguistic Programming, a term never used by Erickson himself. While purveyors of NLP may have identified certain techniques used by Erickson such as the double-bind or negative reinforcement, one could argue that the core of his approach lies in what cannot be reduced to technique and is instead to be found in fluid dimensions of the therapeutic alliance he is able to cultivate with his clients. He connects with them, and his techniques are means of establishing and deepening this organic, intersubjective connection. For this reason, concrete case narratives are much more effective in demonstrating and evoking a sense of his therapeutic efficacy than the abstract enunciation of technique.

Concluding Comparisons: Erickson and O'Halloran

One can note here both similarities and differences between the therapeutic alliance Erickson develops with his young female client and the soteriological alliance that Ban Tetsugyū cultivates with Maura Soshin O'Halloran. They both make use of what at first appear to be the greatest impediments to their respective narratives, their greatest weaknesses (the teeth, the marriage), and turn them into the greatest points of leverage and transformation. They are both emotionally present and attentive to their subjects. They have a clear sense of narrative that is nevertheless intuitively adaptable to the circumstances as they evolve.

However, there are also great differences. Ban's Zen Buddhist soteriology is a tale of renunciation and transcendence, beyond life and death. It entails celibacy, removal from the ordinary life of human society, and is extremely exacting, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is the story of another culture, and evokes the sense of another time. Erickson's story of psychotherapy is life-affirming, bringing its protagonist back from the brink of death. It is a story of romance, sexual fulfillment, and family life in contemporary American society.

Returning to the identification of commonalities, both stories are subject to the pressures of globalization: The technological world that facilitates O'Halloran's transport into the "lived museum" of

the Zen monastery also threatens to undermine the agricultural ground of its vitality. The adventurous romance of Erickson's client, oddly enough, has a kind of Ozzie and Harriet ending that we know is far from benign. As meager as it seems to her, her story only holds up as long as she has her job at the construction firm. When its middle America veneer is peeled back, it will likely reveal the violent forces of globalization that sustain it. Complicating this picture, O'Halloran's narrative in *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind* is punctuated by occasional longings for her own version of the Ozzie and Harriet story: She might pursue an advanced degree and yet become a scholar. She wonders if men back home will still find her attractive with her bald head and odd ways acquired through Zen practice. If she had lived, what kind of Zen center would it have been?

Of course, many versions of either the Buddhist story or the psychotherapeutic one do not even have the happy endings that these narratives present at face value. For every Maura O'Halloran, there may be a thousand practitioners who only partially fulfill their religious aspirations. For every gap-toothed woman turned Cinderella, how many find too many disappointments in life and in work?

In considering the potential wedding of Buddhism and psychotherapy, I have used two narratives that are not yet full hybridizations of the two. Rather, I have selected them as cases that illustrate where they might or might not intersect, with each other and with the narrative of globalization. Taken at face value, one easily cheers for both Maura O'Halloran and the woman with the gap in her teeth. Who would not want to experience great enlightenment and the promise of sharing with a great, beloved Zen master the story of becoming God and Buddha to help all others? At the same time, we do not wish to give up our middle class comforts, and our hopes for our own and our childrens' success, in love, family, and work. Yet, attempting to sustain a middle- to upper-middle-class lifestyle has profound implications at the level of globalization. For more than a few in Buddhist studies, the story of Buddhism and psychotherapy may not be so far away. Loosely defined, "psychotherapy" may be regarded as metonymic of "middle-class America," especially in its intellectually chic versions.

Like a partially cut gemstone, the human species appears quite differently depending upon which side one's gaze falls. From a certain angle, it appears to unleash remarkable flashes of brilliance, as if glinting across the vast expanse of the cosmos. From another angle, though, it is more than a bit rough around the edges, its jagged protrusions cutting into one's very heart. But they say the Buddha's heart of compassion is great, even limitless. When we delve down into the quagmire of our profound karmic confusion, could it be that one finds there, welling up from deep within, the power of boundless compassion illuminating, embracing, and dissolving one into the great ocean of light?

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